

ABSTRACT

Title: North Carolina PHCAST Program

Applicant Name: North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Project Director: Jan Moxley, Project Director to be hired

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The NC Department of Health and Human Services, the NC Foundation for Advanced Health Programs, and a broad-based Partner Team, will develop, pilot, implement, and evaluate a 4 phase comprehensive training and competency program for direct care workers (DCWs) in long term care (LTC) settings. Training and competency will focus primarily on DCW's aiming to work in home and residential care settings with training delivered through community college (CC) and high school (HS) education providers. This will almost triple the 120 average hour training of most entry-level DCW's in NC, and strengthen continuing education (CE) of incumbent workers as new curricula and materials become available to augment in-service training in all LTC settings. The 4 phases include: 1. job readiness skills, literacy, numeracy, keyboarding, and realistic job previewing; 2. non-nurse aide personal care tasks and soft skill development; 3. expanded nurse aide I (NA-I) skills; 4. advanced nurse aide training in clinical and soft skills focused on specific care environments, e.g., home and adult care home settings. Phase 4 will create a track parallel to recently implemented Geriatric Nurse Aide and Medication Aide career path options for nurse aides working in NC nursing homes. All 4 phases will be piloted in both continuous and staged formats enabling delivery and competency certification all at once or in meaningful but manageable steps.

Expected project outcomes include: 1. improving initial DCW- employer matching by giving entry level workers a stronger appreciation of job demands and realistic job previewing; 2. increase uniformity of pre-nurse aide CC/HS training programs by emphasizing soft skills, home management and personal care skills; 3. broaden NA-I training and competency to include soft-skills not currently emphasized in approved NA training programs; 4. create a new Home Care NA category with associated training and competency and listing the state's NA registry; 5. enable CC/HS programs to offer all 4 phases of the training and competency program; 6. expand NC's training/competency options to include levels below and above NA-I for home care; and 7. enhance and extend current training for personal care aides working in adult care homes. An evaluation conducted by the Institute on Aging and Sheps Center at UNC-CH will assess impacts of training on trainees' knowledge, competencies, and supervisor-rated performance; quality of care where possible; as well as identify implementation barriers/facilitators and system changes needed for sustainability. Evaluation design features pre-post training surveys of 300 program participants in all 4 phases and 700 comparable non-participants, including both non-working CC/HS students and incumbent workers, and in-depth semi-structured interviews with up to 40 key informants from the partner team, CC/HS staff, employers, and supervisors, and DCWs.

NC provides an ideal platform from which to launch this project. The state has: long collected workforce and turnover data; successfully secured and coordinated public and private investments (including HRSA) to develop DCW training resources and career ladders; and can provide meaningful incentives for sustaining enhanced DCW competencies through tiered licensure of LTC employers, e.g., NC-NOVA special licensure and a star rating system for adult care homes.